Classical Chinese Thought

Course: PHIL 115, Fall 2002

Time & Location: MW 10:00 — 11:45, F 10:00 — 10:40, Dewing 200.

Professor: Jim Behuniak

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Office & Phone: Forum House, Rm 204. Tel. 337-7349.

Office Hours: Tues. 10:00 to 12:00 & Weds. 1:00 to 3:00, or by appt.

Required Texts:

The Analects of Confucius, tr. Ames/Rosemont (Ballantine Press)

Mozi: Basic Writings, tr. Watson (Columbia Press)

Mencius, tr. Lau (Viking Press)

The Essential Chuang Tzu, tr. Hamil/Seaton (Shambhala Press)

Daodejing (Tao Te Ching), any translation.

Course Description:

In this course, we examine Chinese philosophy in the "classical" age (500-200 B.C.), beginning with an extensive study of the thought of Confucius, who is without doubt the most influential philosopher in the East Asian world. We will survey the ethical, political, and aesthetic views of Confucius through a careful reading of the Analects.

Next we consider the Mohist challenge to Confucian thought and consider the response to that challenge by the Confucian thinker, Mencius. We will read the basic writings of Mozi, whose notion of ethical standards differs sharply from the vision of the Confucians. Mencius, in turn, proposes a Confucian response to the Mohist ethic based on the notion of a morally productive "human disposition" based on feelings of family affection.

The teachings of the Confucian school to which Mencius belonged, the so-called "Si-Meng" lineage that traces back through Confucius' grandson, are currently being brought into focus. Major archeological finds in 1973 and 1993 have recovered what appear to be the core writings of this school. Students will be made aware of these recent developments and provided with portions of these documents in translation.

After Mencius, we turn to the "Daoist" philosophies of Laozi and Zhuangzi. We will read the
enigmatic classic *Daodejing* together in multiple translations. Among the most astonishing discoveries in 1993 was a set of documents known as the "Guodian Laozi" — by far the earliest versions of the *Daodejing*, and a set that includes an entirely "new" section given the title, "Great One Gave Birth to the Waters." An English translation of this short document will be provided for you to read.

We close with Zhuangzi, who represents a form of resistance to the ways of the Mohist, the Confucian, and the Logician alike. Beneath the delightful style and imagery of the *Zhuangzi* are some rather profound philosophical assumptions; we will work together to bring these to the surface.

**Course Goals:**

- to gain a sophisticated appreciation of classical Chinese thought.
- to increase sensitivity to Western cultural and philosophical assumptions that impact the understanding of classical Chinese texts.
- to improve skills of critical reading, writing, and discussion.
- to foster an appreciation of the importance of education, self-cultivation, and deference in the Chinese tradition - and by extension the importance of these in our own lives.

**Expectations, Requirements, and Policies:**

Students will be expected to come to class having read the daily assignment and prepared to participate in discussions of that assignment.

To this end, a number of reading questions (sometimes one, sometimes several) will be distributed in class to correspond with the readings. These questions are designed to help you think through the material as you read and to facilitate your participation in class.

Attendance will be taken each day and participation noticed. Both will factor into your final grade. I reserve the right to increase or decrease grades by one-half letter grade on the basis of participation. As for attendance, failure to attend three classes will result in an automatic reduction of one-half letter grade. The fourth absence will result in an automatic reduction of a full letter grade.

Lateness to class will be frowned upon. So I reserve the right to adjust final grades by one-half letter grade (down) for repeated lateness and to adjust final grades one-half letter grade (up) for perfect, punctual attendance.

Absence or tardiness will be excused only in rare cases (this normally involves the student demonstrating the need for such through proper documentation).

Students will also be required to write four papers: three papers 3-5 pages in length and one paper 6-7 pages in length. Topics for the first three papers will be either specified or suggested, whereas the fourth, final paper will be developed in consultation with the
professor.

All papers are due on the date specified in the course calendar and late papers will not be accepted (or, accepted under very rare circumstances, like those of excused absences — see above).

ALSO, I am committed to a classroom environment in which every student can perform at his or her best. If you have a physical or learning disability that might interfere with your performance, please see me as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made. All such disabilities should be registered with the Dean of Student’s Office.

NOTE: The goal of this course, and of education in general, is to further your ability to engage the new, to connect ideas, and to communicate what you feel and think in ways that make a genuine contribution. For this reason, plagiarism and improper collaboration on class assignments will be taken very seriously. On these matters, please consult Kalamazoo College’s Honor System to which each of us is asked to abide. Do consult with me if there is any confusion in this area. In every case, instances of academic irresponsibility will be forwarded to the Student Development Office and will result in severe grade reduction.

Course Calendar:

F 9/27 Keep reading Analects
M 9/30 Keep reading Analects
W 10/2 Keep reading Analects
F 10/4 Keep reading Analects
M 10/7 Keep reading Analects Paper #1 Due.
W 10/9 Have finished Analects
F 10/11 Read Mo Tzu, pp. 1-38.
M 10/14 Read Mo Tzu, pp. 39-94.
W 10/16 Read Mo Tzu, pp. 95-136.
F 10/18 Read Mencius, Introduction, pp. 7-46.
M 10/21 Read Dispositions Arise From Conditions (handout). Paper #2 Due.
W 10/23 Read Mencius, Bks. 1-3 (pp. 49-116).
F 10/25 Read Mencius, Bk. 4 (pp. 117-137) and Classic of Filial Piety (handout).
M 10/28 Read Mencius, Bks. 5-6 (pp. 138-181).
W 10/30 Read Mencius, Bk. 7 (pp. 182-204).
F 11/1 Read Xunzi (handout).
M 11/4 Have Obtained and Begun Reading a *Daodejing* (Tao Te Ching) **Paper #3 Due.**

W 11/6 Read your *Daodejing* and *Great One Gave Birth to the Waters* (handout).

F 11/8 Keep reading your *Daodejing*

M 11/11 Have finished your *Daodejing*


F 11/15 Keep reading *Chuang Tzu*

M 11/18 Keep reading *Chuang Tzu*

W 11/20 Have finished *Chuang Tzu*

F 11/22 Thanksgiving


W 11/27 Read "Han Cosmologies" (handout).

F 11/29 Final Discussion

**Paper #4 Due on Wednesday, December, 4th. By 5:00 pm.**